

Tennessee Pollution Prevention Partnership Success Story



**Andrew Johnson
Elementary**
1001 Ormond Drive
Kingsport, TN 37664-3235
423-378-2300

www.kpt.k12.tn.us/john/



1-800-734-3619
www.tdec.net/dca/tp3.htm

Patience and Persistence Pay Off For “Closet Recycler”

The Member

Andrew Johnson Elementary School is located on the east side of the City of Kingsport. The 7-acre campus is surrounded by a six or seven-mile radius of residential neighborhoods. The school currently includes a staff of 63 and serves 570 students from kindergarten through fifth grade. The school's mission is to provide a variety of opportunities for students to acquire academic and life skills (including environmental awareness), build a positive self-concept, and develop a life-long enthusiasm for learning. This mission complements the school's vision to be recognized as an exemplary school.



The Story

In 1992, Lynne Harvey began recycling in her classroom because she is a firm believer that lessons are best learned when put into practice. Part of the classroom storage closet was devoted to boxes for recycling, and children were allowed to bring recyclables from home. When the boxes were filled, she loaded them into her truck and delivered them to a local recycling site. She earned the reputation of the “closet recycler.” At that time, Kingsport provided curbside recycling for residents but not for the schools.

The following year, Lynne joined the Keep Kingsport Beautiful Schools Committee, which began to work with the county solid waste department to set up recycling programs in schools. After several years of patient persistence, the school administration and

PTO gave Lynne support to start a schoolwide recycling program in 1999 that included mixed paper, cardboard, and aluminum to be picked up by the county. And in 2003, the new Director of Kingsport Public Works, Roger Hensley, remembered Lynne's passion for recycling and contacted her. He offered to provide bins for the weekly collection of steel cans and plastic drink containers, two commodities that the county does not recycle and the school had been forced to send to the landfill for the past four years.

The Success

Andrew Johnson Elementary has increased its recycling from very few items in 1992 to almost all possible items being recycled in 2003. In the past few years they started collecting plastic grocery bags as part of the Enviro-Bag program at Kroger, who “closes the loop” by selling trash bags made from the recycled grocery bags. The school earns money from the Enviro-Bag program as well as from returning used computer printer cartridges to be refilled. They also collect used batteries and take them to Household Hazardous Waste events. Lynne's efforts have earned her school the “Good Sports Always Recycle” award, and she has been recognized with the TDEC Commissioner's “Gold Star of Excellence Award” for outstanding instructional leadership in environmental stewardship.

The Pollution Prevented

The cafeteria produces an average of 75 gallon cans/week, which have been going to the landfill for years, and are now being recycled. Tons of mixed paper and cardboard are recycled every year, along with aluminum cans and plastic drink containers. In addition, grocery bags, printer cartridges, and batteries are collected at school for recycling. Students are learning life-long habits of environmental stewardship that are carried home to their families and community.

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